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GLANCES AT NEW BOOKS.

BOOKSELLERS' PROFITS — INTERESTS OF AUTHORS—SYSTEM OF REVIEWING.

On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures. By Charles Babbage, Esq. A.M. &c. London: Knight, 1832.

In our last Number we noticed the question of Booksellers' Profits, and alluded to the combination of the publishing houses against the small dealers. Mr Babbage, with reference to the latter point, says:—

'There are two parties who chiefly suffer from this combination—the public and authors. The first party can seldom be induced to take an active part against any grievance; and, in fact, little is required from it except a cordial support of the authors, in any attempt to destroy a combination so injurious to the interests of both. Many an industrious bookseller would be glad to sell for 5*s.* the volume which the reader holds in his hand, and for which he has paid 6*s*; and, in doing so for *ready money*, the tradesman who paid 4*s.* 6*d.* for the book, would realise, without the least risk, a profit of 11 per cent on the money he had advanced. It is one of the objects of the combination we are discussing, to prevent the small capitalist from employing his capital at that rate of profit which he thinks most advantageous to himself; and such a proceeding is decidedly injurious to the public.'

We have before expressed our doubts as to how the combination can be legal; notwithstanding, we do not see that the inferences are borne out by the facts Mr Babbage states respecting it; at least it appears to us that the inferences he draws are inconsistent with the altered state of the trade he would bring about. The small capitalist he assumes is satisfied, in the abstract, with 11 per cent. profit; but in truth he is only satisfied with that rate of profit, because it arises out of an underselling price which brings to his shop more than his proportion of purchasers. Mr Babbage contends, we will not say erroneously, that 33 or 44 per cent is too large a profit, and he would therefore be instrumental in reducing it. Be it so; but a reduction, say to 10 or 11 per cent. would not, as a matter of course, be found satisfactory to those booksellers who are now satisfied with that profit. Now, standing at an advantage with that part of the trade who charge the full price, they are certain of an immediate influx of customers, and consequently run no risk of an accumulating stock; then, the reduced rate of profit being the same all through the trade, the present underseller must be content with a proportion of business equal to his small capital, and partake with the trade generally the risk of loss by a stock. The highest gross profit would then be found too low for him, if as low as 11 per cent. With regard to authors the case is different, a high price restricts circulation; five shillings will produce more purchasers than six, and therefore it may be for the author's advantage that the book be sold at the lower price; but if the bookseller purchases the work of the author, it is not clear that the author loses by the high price affixed to his work, as it is that consideration, perhaps, which induces the bookseller to pay the author so much the more. The question at last reverts to this, what is the equitable rate of profit? Whatever it be, it must be such as will remunerate the bookseller for his outlay, or neither the public nor authors can eventually be the better for it. On the assumption that the public and authors are at present aggrieved, Mr Babbage proposes a remedy, which is no other than a counter-combination of authors. We shall go into particulars another time, at present we shall only say that we have no faith in it; but we have great faith in the good likely to result from the destruction of the system exposed in the following passage.

'Before we proceed to sketch the plan of a campaign against Paternoster Row, it will be fit to inform the reader of the nature of the enemies' forces, and of his means of attack and defence. Several of the great publishers find it convenient to be the proprietors of *Reviews*, *Magazines*, *Journals*, and even of *Newspapers*. The *Editors* are paid, in some instances, very handsomely for their superintendence; and it is scarcely to be expected that they should always mete out the severest justice on works by the sale of which their employers are enriched. The great and popular works of the day are of course reviewed with some care, and with deference to public opinion. Without this, the journals would not sell; and it is convenient to be able to quote such articles as instances of impartiality. Under shelter of this, a host of ephemeral productions are written into a transitory popularity; and by the aid of this process, the shelves of the booksellers, as well as the pockets of the public, are disencumbered. To such an extent are these means employed, that some of the periodial publications of the day, ought to be regarded merely as *Advertising Machines*. That the reader may be in some measure on his guard against such modes of influencing his judgment, he should examine whether the work reviewed is published by the bookseller who is the proprietor of the Review; a fact which can sometimes be ascertained from the title of the book, as given at the head of the article. But this is by no means a certain criterion, because partnerships in various publications exist between houses in the book trade, which are not generally known to the public; so that, in fact, until Reviews are established in which booksellers have no interest, they can never safely be trusted.'

The propriety of such a system, in a moral point of view, cannot, for a moment, be contended for; it necessarily generates partiality, and partiality is injustice; but after the insight which the public have acquired into its nature, it is questionable how far it is productive of benefit even to those who uphold it. Such a system depends for success on the ignorance of the public, and in proportion as that disappears the system must fail of its end. We suspect that the shelves of some of the great publishers could tell a heavy tale of the inefficacy of the present mode of reviewing; and when they are counting up their losses, we recommend them to add whatever expenditure they have incurred, founded on their expectation of being able to secure a sale, by means of recommendations in their own reviews, and also the amount of that species of advertisements known to the literary public by the name of puff paragraphs.

The bookselling trade is in anything but a flourishing state just now, and therefore it is a good time to examine into the causes of its depression; part of that depression, we have no doubt, is referable to the notions which have prevailed, as to the possibility of permanently making the trade prosperous, by a system of false representations and quackish practices, and we live in hope that publishers will by and bye come round to the opinion that the permanent interests of literature are dependent on its respectability.

HOW TO BE CHEERFUL AND CONTENT.

TO THE TATLER.

Sir,—In the foolish flutter of existence, no error is so common as that cherished by the busy and laborious, that happiness consists in idleness, and in the mere appendages of rank and luxury—in this plaything or that—springing from the mere whim of the moment, which as we attain, almost as instantly *tires* us, from the very perversity of our very natures: this common-place truth, however, may be told and read a thousand times over in good books—be witnessed in our streets, in the park, and in crowded drawing-rooms every day of our lives—or in the country if one likes better to visit the various seats of the wholly-idle and luxurious,—who, after all, lacking something better to do, labour at amusements—and amuse themselves at labour! Hence, one man digs in his garden, another gets a costly turning lathe, another takes his gun or fishes, and a fourth looks after his grounds as a sort of understrapper to his own steward; meantime, their wives and daughters drive in their carriages to the nearest market town or village to create themselves *business* of some sort—are sometimes benevolent from sheer ennui, as at others from having their sympathies awakened by the closer contact of mere physical want—which, after all, is perhaps the least painful of all our wants! for the real truth is, that happiness is most equally distributed throughout the world—the children of a cottager, or in one of our bye London alleys, running about in rags and dirt, playing with each other, have really more animal enjoyment than the little aristocratic things kept in check by nurses in the Park, and properly taught to behave themselves more sedately in their nice clothes. Yes, we are told these simple truths every day—every day see them before our eyes—and yet grow nothing the wiser—it is an eternal discontent and struggle to be, what we *are not*; which by the bye is just as it should be, or we should sink into a sort of apathetical indifference, no more wholesome or proper than the sparkling and fretting brook dried up to stagnate—thence let us run on, fret over our pebbles—take 'sermons out of stones, and good out of every thing.'

I have been led into this sober mood by calling at a friend's in Bond street, whose drawing-room windows exactly face, and in some measure overlook an humble second floor opposite, where some dozen milliner girls work every day of the week from morning till night, and very often, he said, as late as ten or eleven o'clock; 'poor things,' said my friend (no other than our *Dandy of the Clarendon*), 'what a pity 'tis they are mewed up so—'pon honor it's a pity; and yet hang it, I've been ogling this last week to no purpose; not one of them has given me a single look; that's because there are so many of them together, they're afraid of each other, and are besides kept in check by a sage sort of Urganda, the mistress, an old *couturière en Robes*. 'O ho! Master Sly, so much for your sympathy,' said I—'You're very much afraid of their working too hard, are you?'—'O lard, if I chose to give myself any trouble!' yawned out my man, throwing himself back in his chair in the most desperate state of vacancy, 'but really, it is a devil of a life they lead, mere machines—positively pretty machines! I'm told they do not earn above a shilling or eighteen-pence a day, and many of them get nothing, but have to learn the trade.' 'Right,' replied I, 'and lucky to get leave, for it is, let me tell you, an excellent calling, and much patronized by our belles; who can no more make their own dresses than you would your coat! Now I'll lay you a bet that those girls are a great deal happier than you and I, and that the very work they do is a greater pleasure to them than you can invent for yourself, or others for you, any one day of the week.'—'Hallo!' cried he, with an incredulous stare, 'on a shilling a day, eh!'—'A *shilling*, my fine fellow, what would you say to *two-pence* a day, for twelve hours' constant activity of the fingures, which is all hundreds, perhaps thousands, of poor girls can earn, for one yard of narrow lace, close by us, in the county of Buckingham?' (My Clarendon youth, at this part, threw his head quite back, and rolled his eyes at the ceiling with the most comical expression.) 'Fact, upon my honour,' continued I. 'I could not have believed it, but that I have seen it with my own eyes, heard it from their own mouths; and for this very lace they are obliged to find thread, paper, and pins, and make their cards; so that their clear profits are even less than two-pence!!! Yet though I confess this seems enough to throw industry into despair, I saw no despair, but plenty of good looks and cheerfulness, and a thousand times more content, perhaps happiness, than comes to your share. Now do, my dear fellow, reflect on this little fact; I'm sure you'll pass a pleasanter day for it. What are you going to be at to-day?'—'At? why, let me see: egad, I hardly know. Oh, a party of us are going down to the Green Man, at Blackheath Hill, to patronise the Russian Horn Band. What a bore to dine at half-past six o'clock! eh! it annoys me horribly; but I've promised; so, as we must be down there by eight, I'll take a turn with you along Pall-mall, to get an appetite if possible; but really it is a great bore.'—'Will you recollect the poor lace-girls of Bucks?' said I, as we went down stairs.

Hermit of Park Lane.

TIME.

Time, the most precious of all possessions, is, commonly, the least prized. It is, like health, regretted when gone; but rarely improved while present. We know it is irrevocable, yet throw it wantonly away. We know it is fleet, yet fail to catch the current moment. It is the space of life, and while we never properly occupy its limits, we nevertheless murmur at their narrowness. It is the field of exertion, and while we continually leave it fallow, we yet sorrow over our stinted harvest.

The most listless are, however, those that are most ready to cry, 'What is life?' As the Chinese, who, unable to wind up the watch, threw it aside, exclaiming, 'It is dead.' Energy knows that time, like the invested talent, pays a large percentage on its employment. Dr Johnson and Godwin both speak of the sufficiency of time, and have given immortal evidence to attest the truth. Erasmus, it is recorded, composed 'The Praise of Folly' on horseback, during a journey in Italy. Of such men we may say, as the poet does of Shakspeare, that—

'Panting time toils after them in vain.'

They gain on his march, and he never overtakes them; it is the sluggard he passes with contempt, and leaves to oblivion.

'I measure life,' says Mrs Barbauld, 'by life's employment.' By such admeasurement, many minors have earned the meed the centenarian has missed. Few of the great works of genius have grown amid luxurious and abundant leisure: they have, in general, been the product of laborious effort in the intervals of less congenial toils; during the pauses of dull drudgery, enjoined by necessity and exacted by avarice, they have been elaborated amid neglect, anxiety, and privation. They that have spread light through the world had often scarcely oil for the lamp by which they worked; they that have left imperishable records of their mind, had often little to

support the body, and gave forth the incense, in which knowledge is embalmed ' in self-consuming flames.'

All that have obtained for themselves great and permanent reputation, have won and secured it by patient and persevering labour; by treating time, not as a waste land fit only for the stubble and the goose, but as a true estate, of which no corner is to be left uncultivated. Locke carried his note-book in his pocket, to catch the scintillations of even common conversation. Pope employed the wakeful moments of the night. They felt as did Arnault, when he replied to the objection of Nicole, who, on a new work being proposed, said—' We are now old, is it not time we should rest ?'—' Rest !' exclaimed Arnault, ' *Have we not all eternity to rest in ?*' Hear how Hazlitt, in the green vigour of his genius, speaks to us from his grave—' The more people do, the more they can do. He that does nothing, renders himself incapable of doing anything. While we are executing one work, we are preparing ourselves to undertake another.'

He that neglects time, time will neglect. The idler, like the idiot, stands in the lowest scale of humanity, morally considered, even lower; for indolence wastes; but imbecility wants: the one abandons himself, the other has been abandoned. The stream of time is fraught with golden sand; but it flings to the idler nothing but its froth, and he falls, like ' the fat weed on Lethe's stream,' without ever having flourished.

M. L. G.

MORNING.

'Thine ankles bind with sandals blue,
Nor fear the damp of mountain dew;
'Twere shame to shut those eyes in sleep,
While up the heaven's etherial steep
The little lark has flown, to pay
His heart's warm homage to the rising day.

O what a soul that lark must have,
His feather'd nest so soon to leave,
And poised upon his little outspread wing,
Such wild spontaneous praise to sing,
As o'er the earth, and up the skies,
The glories of the morning rise.

While man, the high, the heaven-endowed,
The wise, the powerful, the proud,
Who arrogates alone to be
Created for eternity,
Upon the couch of sleep reclined,
To puerile visions yields his captive mind.

Then ope thine eyes, thy sweet blue eyes,
With all that's heavenly born to sympathise,
Thy spirit free from slumber's leaden chain;
And up the mountain's dewy side
Ascend with me to take a prospect wide,
Of nature's fair domain;
To hear the lark her early matins sing,
To mark the life and joy of everything,
And with earth's teeming incense raise
Thy gentle bosom's pious, ardent praise.

M. S. S.

Taxes all Day.—A humourous foreigner has remarked, that in England, the people are taxed in the morning for the soap that washes their hand; at nine, for the tea, coffee, and sugar; at noon, for the starch for which they powder their hair; at dinner, for the salt that savours their meat; in the evening, for the porter that cheers their spirits; all day long, for the light that enters their windows; and at night, for the candles that light them to bed.—*Recreative Review.*—[The powder and salt tax have been taken off since this was written.]

THEATRICALS.

Covent Garden.

Paganini's Second Concert attracted a full house on Tuesday. Although everybody who even partly appreciates the astonishing powers of this great musician must leave the theatre abundantly gratified, we think the manager would do well to pay more attention to the other parts of the concert. As a speculation for four nights, it may not much signify in a pecuniary point of view, but a matter of taste should be managed in a tasteful manner, and the superiority of Paganini should itself operate as a reason to have all his coadjutors as nearly worthy of him as possible. Many go to hear Paganini on the strength of his lionship; people who are more amazed than pleased with the wonders he performs; and their enjoyment might be so far consulted as to engage some of their known favourites. We were grateful for one splendid exception to the general mediocrity, in the person of Miss Inverarity, whom, on almost every occasion, we think we never heard before to so much advantage. When she sang ' Should he upbraid,' she so steeped it in sweetness, that being in the second tier, and remembering the anecdote related of somebody, who was near throwing himself from a similar eminence, through excess of delight with the singing of a certain performer, we held to our seat with unusual tenacity, willing to retain life if for no other purpose than to hear her again. The only other vocal performers were Signora Pietralia and Mr Bennett, the latter a singer of merit within a certain compass, the former a lady not likely to become a favourite with an English audience. Her voice is harsh and unpleasing, and but little relieved by notes of an agreeable quality. The three pieces selected on this occasion by the ' Grand Signor ' himself, were a rondo, a military rondo, and the variazione, Sul Tema, ' Nel cor piu,' principally his own compositions, in all of which he acquitted himself in his usual triumphant manner. It is delightful to witness the homage which silence pays to genius, on one of those occasions when he draws out a sound to such a point of fineness, that, like a tender silken thread, you think it must break; meantime the attention of the whole house deepens, stillness, as it were, recedes into more and more intenseness, until a sharp draw of the bow proclaims the musician's mastery over all difficulties, and the audience are permitted to breathe again. We ought to mention, with praise, Mr Ribas' fantasia on the flute, and the general performance of the band.

Mr Laporte, the new Lessee of Covent Garden Theatre, has opened the house for a few nights, with a small company of French commedians; Mademoiselle Mars and Monsieur Armand forming the principal points of attraction. The sticklers of the English legitimate drama (who by the way are its supporters in word only, and not in deed) affect to protest against this appropriation of their ' national theatre.' Their national theatre and their legitimate drama are going to the dogs as fast as artificial representation, and free admissions can carry them; and the last we believe to be the real cause of dry-rot in the building. It is a principle in human nature, even with the covetous part of it, to esteem that lightly which may be obtained for nothing. If tailors and shoemakers were to give orders to their friends to receive coats and boots when these required a reinvestment, the chance is that the tailor and shoemaker would quickly become insolvent; for their acquaintance would not buy, unless compelled by circumstances—they would wait till they could procure ' an order;' and the tailor having given the coat, there are ten chances to one that it would be the means of attracting a single purchaser more to his shop, than if he had never given it: the gratuitant, too, would not

be better pleased with his gift, than he who had paid for it. Whatever we desire, and procure with labour, is relished the more exquisitely: the first curse—that man should live by the sweat of his brow—was a covert blessing. If the whole human race could receive '*orders*' to pass through the great theatre of existence, mankind would rot in idleness: some among us have those passports; and they are the least enviable of the species. If time and space allowed, we think that we have arguments enough to prove that the system alluded to has been one origin, and no unimportant one, of the decline of the drama in this country.

To return to the 'national theatre.' For our own parts, we care not whether the dialogue be repeated in English or in French: we can *read* both at home, and can picture the situations as we read: but we prefer seeing the French actors to our own, because they are more natural; if the English, take them as a body, were better performers than the French, the latter would not have succeeded here longer than the novelty of one season; and we believe that if Mr Laporte vary his entertainments at his new establishment with performances by his own countrymen, those will prove the most profitable of the season.

The little comedy of '*Valerie, ou L'Aveugle*,' in which Mademoiselle Mars appeared on Monday evening, is well known to most of our readers; for it has been translated and performed at the Haymarket. The chief merit in this fascinating woman's performance does not consist so much in the fidelity of her representing the actions, expression, and habits of a blind person, strictly accurate to the life as these are; an ordinary pains-taker and observer could do all this; but the exquisite delicacy with which she appreciates the tender sentiment of the character—the sweet resignation, the affecting dependence upon others, the plaintive but not querulous regret with which she endures her lover's absence: these constitute the great charm of her personation. To those who had watched her tone and manner throughout, the discrimination she manifested must have been as perceptible as delightful. Before the return of her lover, her voice sank upon the ear like a melody in the minor key. Never can we forget her intonation upon those words: 'Croyez moi, mon ami, le malheur—c'est l'absence.' And when he has come back again to her, her general discourse became quicker and more elastic, still however repressed by the misfortune—the eternal presence of her blindness. The person who can witness with indifference the simple pathos of Mademoiselle Mars in *Valerie*, may rest assured that from one 'entrance' to a highly intellectual gratification they 'are quite shut out.'

The evening's entertainments conclude with the dancing of the graceful Taglioni. With such a combination of supremacy, no wonder that the house was unusually filled.

English Opera, Olympic.

There have been two or three new appearances here, which we have accidentally been prevented from noticing, we shall not be long in doing ourselves that pleasure. We saw, the other night, *Gretna Green* in all its glory. Miss Kelly's *Betty Finnikin* and Wrench's *Mr Jenkins* are worthy of the best times of comic acting.

New Strand.

The farce of *A Husband Wanted*, lately produced here, is a very lively and laughable production. It is attributed in a Morning paper to Mr W. L. Rede, but erroneously. We have heard a Mr Raymond mentioned as the author, and have also been told that it has no pretensions to novelty, being in fact, a revivification of a farce produced a few years back at Drury Lane, under the title of *Is He Alive?* The practice of bringing forth forgotten pieces under new names has increased of late; it is evidently a deception on the public, and ought to be discountenanced.

The acting is worthy a Patent Theatre, if any Theatre can be worthy of a Patent.

New City Theatre.

This theatre has changed hands miraculously quick: last week it was under the management of Mr Jones (and he but some ten days manager—alas! for frail theatricals!) Now we have Mr Balls, of the Surrey, reigning in his stead. He promises some of the popular unengaged performers, and has commenced with Mrs Gibbs, late Miss Graddon. We were too late the other night for *Pizarro*, and to say the truth, were glad to be spared the infliction, though something might be expected from G. Bennet's *Rolla*. *Perfection* was decently played; Mrs Gibbs sang agreeably; Mr Manders, in *Sam*, looked like a miniature George the Fourth, *gros, gras, et bête*. This actor's love-making is to us the coarsest and most footmanlike on the stage. The *Spectre Bridegroom* followed, and was as usual highly relished by the audience. Mr H. Johnston and Miss S. Booth are both engaged, and will appear shortly. These and many others we could name, each excellent in their way, and capable of much service as regular members of a company, go about from theatre to theatre, literally spoiling themselves; they fail to attract as stars, and often put themselves into characters they are unfit to sustain; so that neither the management nor the performers profit by it in the long-run. The real secret of the success of Madame Vestris and Mrs Waylett we take to be this,—they have both of them been fortunate enough to form excellent companies, and so engage their performers as to be able to keep them together: they produce good pieces, and their stars take parts in them. The City Theatre should act on a principle of this sort, and not rely for success on such fugitive stars as those above alluded to.

S. W. H.

We had not room, in our last publication, to extend our remarks on the new piece at the Haymarket, called *A Duel in Richelieu's Time*, nor was much remark necessary; we may observe, however, that the incidents follow quickly on each other, and the principal characters are in a state of mysterious excitement from first to last; yet our sympathy is not much moved for any of them. The language is a mixture of devotion and familiarity.—The acting deserves praise, at least for energy; the nature of the parts left little room for repose. Vining, in *De Chalais*, Younge, in the quiet character of his Secretary, and Webster, occasionally in the Abbé, struck us as most entitled to praise. Miss Taylor had a part of difficulty, and, on the whole, acquitted herself well.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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